

CHAPTER II.

THE ORDEAL BY WATER.

WE were too hasty in pronouncing it impossible that the little shell struck from the gorge-wall of the roaring stream could ever have belonged to a living animal. It is quite true that no being now exists in the waters of the land or the ocean which can be exactly identified with it. There are forms in the sea, however, which possess every characteristic by which we distinguished it from the river mussel. The resemblances are so close that we are compelled to admit that this may really be a marine form. We look again at the pile of rocks from which this specimen was taken. Layer after layer succeeds from the bottom to the top; and here and there are other similar forms imbedded between the sheets of shale. If these are marine forms, these strata are marine sediments. But here is the difficulty. This place is hundreds of feet above the surface of the sea, and if ever the sea stood at this level the greater part of the continent must have been submerged. But have we not a record of such a submergence? Yes, indeed; the sacred writers tell us of a deluge which destroyed the human family. A tradition of the same has been embalmed in Ovid's myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha; and nearly every nation under the sun, from the cultured Greek to the savage Koloschian of Alaska, has its legend under which the memory of the Deluge has been perpetuated. Shall we then content ourselves with the conclusion that this pile of strata was laid down by the waters of the Noachian flood, and that these molluses were